

ESG 2015 – Parts 2 and 3

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ESG 2015 - Main changes in Part 2

- **Rearrangement:** moving some standards from and to part 3 (and part 1) to make it more consistent and logical
- Standard 1.10: **cyclical review** (moved out of Part 2) - In line with the idea of an open QA area, the responsibility of the cyclicity of the reviews is put to the HEI, from the agency
- Standard 2.4: peer-review experts
 - A new standard → More focus on role of peer-reviewers
 - **requires a student member**, in guidelines **recommends** international experts
- Standard 2.6: reporting
 - requires publication of **full expert** report (summaries and/or decisions not enough!)
 - whether positive or negative
 - “Intended readership” clarified
- Standard 2.7 (from ex 3.7 guidelines): complaints and appeals
 - emphasised (a standard of its own)
 - **now required for all procedures** (whether formal outcomes or not)

ESG 2015 – Part 2

2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

2.3 Implementing processes

2.4 Peer-review experts

2.5 Criteria for formal outcomes

2.6 Reporting

2.7 Complaints and appeals

ESG 2005 – Part 2

2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures

2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes

2.3 Criteria for decisions

2.4 Processes fit for purpose

2.5 Reporting

2.6 Follow-up procedures

2.7 Periodic reviews

2.8 System-wide analyses

ESG 2015 - Main changes in Part 3

- **3.3: Notion of independence explained better**
 - organisational, operational, and of outcomes
 - third party involved *in individual capacity* (to strike the balance between stakeholder involvement and independence)
- 3.5: resources - now has **guidelines that explain what is “adequate resources”**: not only QA activities, but also thematic analysis, information activities, etc.
- **3.6: Professional conduct**: the requirement to use same levels/standards abroad and at home

ESG 2015 – Part 3

3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

3.2 Official status

3.3 Independence

3.4 Thematic analysis

3.5 Resources

3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct of the agencies

3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

ESG 2005 – Part 3

3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education

3.2 Official status

3.3 Activities

3.4 Resources

3.5 Mission statement

3.6 Independence

3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies

3.8 Accountability procedures

Some important changes overall

- **The ESG 2015 explicitly state that they apply to all programmes** whichever mode or place of delivery in the EHEA (elearning, cross-border HE...) → many questions to agencies, such as:
 - Should there be site visits to programmes delivered abroad?
Cost, practicalities etc.?
 - How to assess elearning? (see below)
- Apply to agencies **wherever they carry out EQA and whether the activities are compulsory or voluntary** → Cross-border QA needs to be ESG compliant, too
- Underlines the **importance of enhancement for all QA processes**, and the support EQA needs to give to the **development of a quality culture at HEIs**
- Strong focus on **the shift to student-centered learning**

ESG 2015 and elearning

- ESG apply to elearning as much as to any other learning!
- **BUT: agencies may need to rethink the criteria they use** as some may not make (so much) sense for elearning: drop-out rate, m2/student, teacher-student ratio...
- On the other hand: elearning **brings specific challenges and risks**: student involvement and engagement (student centred?); trustworthy assessment methods; integrating students into the academic community?
- Is elearning bringing in **different answers to the question “what is quality”**? How can quality assurance agencies capture and assess this?
- Practical issues such as the inclusion of students from elearning/blended programmes into interviewees in a site visit?
- Agencies need to accept and adapt fast to the changes and most of all to make **sure that the criteria and methods used are not disfavouring elearning/blended learning** over traditionally delivered programmes AND at the same time, ensure that elearning elements are – if not the same – of equal quality to other elements!
- → not to discourage HEIs from trying out innovative methods, while also protecting students and their interest (elearning should not be considered as class B – HE)

EQA and IQA – a collaborative relationship

- **Primary responsibility of HEIs** for quality and quality assurance of their own provision
- Role of external QA is to:
 - Provide a way for autonomous institutions to **demonstrate their accountability externally**
 - **Support the HEIs in constant enhancement** of HE provision and its quality assurance
- Build on each other: EQA can only be successful if it takes into account and is informed by IQA – IQA can be further developed and supported by EQA
- Concentric circles, one smaller only for sphere of activity, not for importance!
- ESG 3 parts: part 1 on IQA → not the work of the agency to implement, but to ensure that the HEIs have reliable and well functioning mechanisms in place to address Part 1

Trends (and challenges) in external quality assurance in the EHEA

- **External accountability of agencies** is widely accepted – and expected (ENQA/EQAR)
- By far most EHEA countries have now **an independent QA agency**, compared to a minority 10 years ago
- Possible move to “**softer**” **approaches** (fitness-for-purpose), especially in well-established QA systems: from programme to institutional approaches; risk-based methods; more flexible methods or methods based more on IQA/institutional priorities; etc. **BUT the picture is not univocal**
- Going **beyond minimum standards** and find ways to measure and reward excellence (of different types!)
- **More attention to impact** (agencies, too, need to demonstrate that they are “worth the expense”)
- Greater importance given to the **quality, usefulness and readability of reports** (competing with international or national rankings as information source?)

Trends – cont.

- Several **requirements in ESG 2015**: “good practice” in many agencies for several years: student involvement; publication of reports; collaborative relationship with HEIs, etc. BUT for some agencies big changes are still ahead
- **Broadening of activities** (consultancy and support; training; projects; studies to support policy making...)
 - resources?
 - adequate separation of consultancy and QA activities
 - competencies and training of staff
- **Internationalisation of QA agencies**
 - not only (or even mainly) about cross-border QA
 - recognition of usefulness to use international reviewers (small systems, but not only)
 - networking (ENQA, but also Nordic Network, CEENQA, ECA, INQAAHE...)
 - International collaborative projects
 - joint reviews



Thank you!

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